

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6802

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, SY, LE

SUBJECT: MARCH 18 SYRIAN MEDIA REPORTING ON LEBANON

1. AFTER OBSERVING TOTAL BLACKOUT FOR PAST SIX DAYS, DAMASCUS RADIO HAS RESUMED DETAILED FACTUAL REPORTING OF LEBANESE EVENTS. EVENING RADIO MARCH 17 ANNOUNCED ASAD RECEIVED PHALANGE POLITBURO MEMBERS PAKRADUNI AND SAADAH THAT AFTERNOON. MORNING BROADCAST MARCH 18 CARRIED LENGTHY REPORT OF TELEPHONE CONVERSATION BETWEEN ASAD AND AHDAB PREVIOUS DAY IN WHICH LATTER EXPRESSED APPRECIATION FOR SYRIAN INITIATIVE. ASAD EXPRESSED HOPE THAT LEBANESE WOULD EXERT "SELF-CONTROL" IN ORDER TO PERMIT OPPORTUNITY FOR "DISCUSSIONS AND CONTACTS" TO REACH SATISFACTORY RESULTS. RADIO ALSO MENTIONED STATEMENT BY LEBANESE DEPUTY ABD AL-LATIF ZAYN CLAIMING THAT ALL LEBANESE NOW FAVOR SYRIAN INITIATIVE AND THAT WITHIN POLITICAL FIELD "THERE IS ONLY ROOM FOR LEGALITY."

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2. PRESS REPORTED ABOVE AND CITED STATEMENTS BY OTHER LEBANESE POLITICIANS. LEBANESE DEPUTY HUSAYN HUSAYN NOTED THAT "ONCE AGAIN" SYRIA RESCUED LEBANON FROM ARMED CLASHES AND THREAT OF RENEWED CIVIL WAR. AL-BAATH REFERRED TO COMMENTS BY PRIMIN KARAME TO VISITORS THAT POLITICAL SOLUTION WOULD END CRISIS, THAT FRANGIE'S REMOVAL HAD BECOME A CERTAINTY, AND THAT LEGALITY RESTS WITH LEBANESE PARLIAMENT.

3. COMMENT: RESUMPTION OF SYRIAN BROADCASTS ABOUT LEBANESE SITUATION MAY INDICATE THAT DAMASCUS BELIEVES EVENS NOW MOVING IN DIRECTION IT WANTS AND THAT STRONG PUSH NEEDED TO RESOLVE IMPASSE. LAST BROADCAST FEW DAYS AGO GAVE EVEN HANDED COVERAGE TO ASAD'S CONTACTS WITH AHDAB AND PRESIDENCY. TODAY'S REPORTS MENTION ONLY CONTACTS WITH AHDAB, SUGGESTING THAT SYRIA SWINGING AWAY FROM SUPPORTING CONTINUANCE OF FRANGIE AS PRESIDENT. ASAD COMMENTS TO AHDAB SEEMED AIMED AT CAUTIONING HIM AND OTHERS FROM UNDERTAKING ANY PRECIPITIOUS ACTION THAT MIGHT UPSET POLITICAL MANEUVERING NOW UNDERWAY TO EAST FRANGIE OUT BY "LEGAL" METHODS.
MURPHY

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